

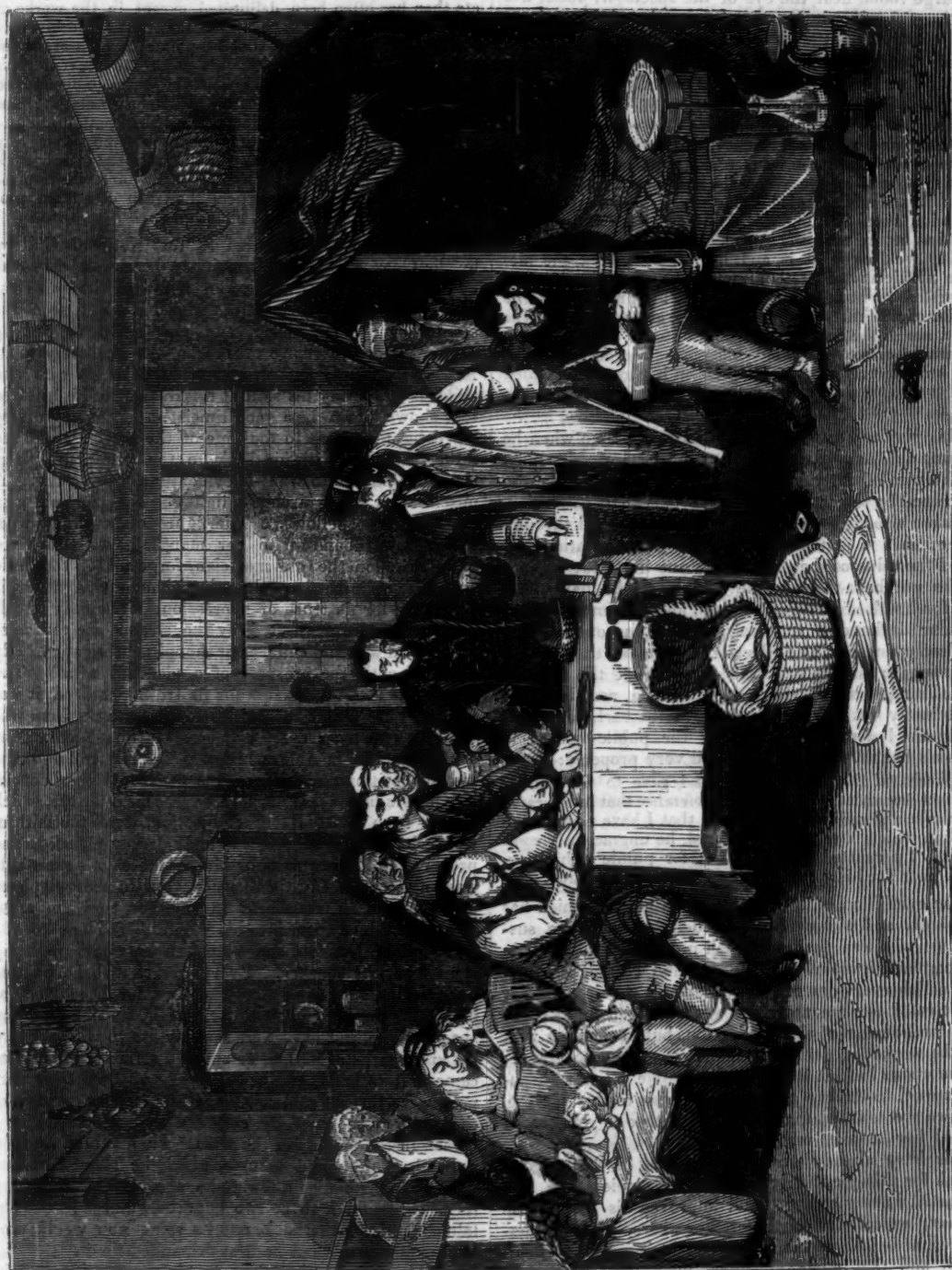
Saturday Magazine.

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FROM SIR DAVID WILKIE'S PICTURE
DISTRAINING FOR RENT.

SIR DAVID WILKIE AND HIS WORKS.

II.

In the year 1806, when our artist had only just attained the age of manhood, he exhibited his first picture in the rooms of the Royal Academy. The subject of the picture was the well-known "Village Politicians." The Committee, appointed by the Council to arrange the pictures upon the walls for the exhibition, were so much surprised by the rare display of talent manifested in the group, that it was unanimously determined to hang it in the best situation. This was at the chimney-piece of the large room, near the eye of the spectator, about five feet from the floor. During the months of May, June, and July, the attention of crowds of visitors was attracted by this picture, and the encomiums passed upon it were loud and warm. A writer of the day says:—

Of this very surprising picture it is difficult to speak in higher terms than it deserves: some of the diurnal critics have compared, and even preferred it to Hogarth. This judgment (or rather the want of it) must have been pronounced upon it by those who did not know Hogarth's pictures: it is much more in the style of Teniers, but it is not in imitation of him. Mr. Wilkie may be said to have looked at nature with the same spirit and eye that Teniers would have looked at it, and he has delineated the ale-house politicians of Scotland with the same fidelity that Teniers has represented the Dutch and Flemish boozers. The interior of a country ale-house, and the general effect of the whole, are in the finest style, and lead us to rejoice at the appearance of so promising an artist. We do not know him, but sincerely congratulate him on his first essay, which gives every promise of the painter being destined to rank very high in his profession, and that in a very short time.

This picture was painted by Wilkie at a time when he was unemployed. It was sold to the Earl of Mansfield for the sum of forty guineas—a modest price certainly, but named by the artist himself previous to its exhibition. We have already seen how honourably it passed through this ordeal: it is true that the public admiration had raised the value of the picture to many times the amount of the purchase-money: the picture might have been sold for hundreds instead of tens, and an eminent connoisseur declared it to be a prize to any one at four hundred guineas. The effect of all this on the mind of the young artist was to dissatisfy him with the bargain he had made with the Earl of Mansfield, and he most unadvisedly got a friend to write to the earl, complaining of the low price, and quoting the public opinion in Wilkie's behalf. The earl replied very properly:—

I purchased the piece publicly, and gave to the painter the sum demanded, which was a preference that he appeared to be much pleased with; but now that I have made a speculation which is generally approved, he ungraciously complains. I permitted him to send it for public exhibition, and I consider his appeal to me to savour of exaction.

The exhibition of 1807 contained a picture which has delighted, and will continue to delight, every one susceptible of those feelings which unite man to man in one common brotherhood. The Blind Fiddler is a picture which every one can understand: it requires neither a cultivated eye nor a correct taste for art, to feel the truth and beauty of this production, but in common with all the works of genius, it improves on acquaintance: the more we look at it the better we like it: new beauties appeal to the eye at every new visit to this picture, and we are satisfied that the artist is true to Nature in one of her happiest moods.

We have already given the history of the original sketch for this picture: the reader will understand that the artist having enlarged and improved his idea of the subject, executed it with far more care, and with improved artistical means, knowing that it was to be exhibited, and that much depended upon its reception in public. This picture was Wilkie's execution of an order from Sir George Beaumont for a painting of the value of fifty pounds. The excellence of the picture at once

established the reputation of the artist, and raised the value of his efforts to an almost unlimited extent. A critic of the day thus notices this picture:—

The Blind Fiddler is the only picture which that extraordinary young artist, Mr. David Wilkie, has in this exhibition, and it is conceived and executed in a style which leads us to regret that there are not more. It is highly finished, without any appearance of being laboured, and the story is so told as to interest the spectator in the scene. Not attempting to allure the eye by glittering colours, the painter has displayed a genuine unadulterated representation of nature. The characters are admirably contrasted, and marked with a felicity of expression more strictly appropriate than has often been delineated, except in the works of the inimitable Hogarth. It has lately become a fashionable opinion amongst painters, that all pictures which are to be exhibited must be coloured above nature, to prevent their being either overborne by the works of others, or overlooked by visitors in so large a room. This has sometimes led them into a meretricious colouring, in which, attempting to be splendidly attractive, they have become offensively gaudy. This picture proves the impropriety of any such systematic departure from truth, and we hope will impress upon the minds of young artists, the truth of an old proverb, that all which glitters is not gold.

This picture was presented to the National Gallery by Sir George Beaumont, and has been well engraved by John Burnet. A notice of a few of the principal details may be useful to those who have not seen the picture or the engraving, and may serve to call up pleasant recollections to those who are familiar with it. A poor wandering fiddler, accompanied by his wife and child, is exhibiting his skill at a farm-house: his uplifted foot shows him to be a good timeist: a mother is tossing her delighted infant to the time of the music, while the father, standing with his back to the ample fire-place, snaps his fingers to what is evidently a lively tune. A mischievous young urchin is imitating the poor old man on a pair of bellows. The figure of a child, who, with her left hand up to her mouth, gazes with fixed attention upon the old musician, forgetful of the little cart which she has been dragging about with a string, is admirable for its truth of expression. The only individuals who seem unaffected by the strains are the minstrel's own wife and child, their thoughts being apparently occupied with the prospect of a plentiful meal. The still life is also remarkable for its truth. Indeed, it was the habit of Wilkie to transfer to his canvass from the things themselves every article of furniture, &c., however minute or humble, which was to be introduced into his composition: and if possible the model was brought into his studio for that purpose, so that his interiors, which convey such exactness of delineation, were the faithful transcripts of the models he had already planned, and procured to be executed for him. One of his assistants was engaged for days in the endeavour to procure pieces of turf, such as are burnt in cottages, that the artist might introduce them into his "Alfred." None were to be found in London, and he paid a waggoner to bring some from the country. Every picture that he painted had its numerous subsidiary sketches, for heads and for hands, for single figures and for groups, and for light and shade: these first ideas were roughly drawn with pen and ink upon backs of letters, or any odd scraps of paper that came first to hand, and when they had served their purpose were thrown aside. Many of these sweepings of the study were carefully collected and preserved by a person in the employ of the artist. He mounted them in a handsomely bound volume, which he showed to the writer of this notice a few years ago, who, on inquiring its price, found it to be two hundred guineas! He obtained 100*l.* for the book, and its value now would probably amount to what he first demanded for it.

Wilkie was very fastidious in his composition, and in the arrangement of his groups, designing them many times before he satisfied himself. A friend informs us that he has seen many of Wilkie's designs for the prin-

cipal groups in the Village Holiday and other pictures, with but slight difference between them, yet every alteration was an improvement. When the artist had settled his composition in this manner, he made a small loose sketch in oil-colour of the intended picture, and sometimes corrected that sketch.

Into all his earlier pictures Wilkie introduced characters such as his native land readily supplied. From a boy his memory was stored with the characteristic features of every strolling fiddler, wandering tinker, or mendicant bag-piper that passed before him. He also procured to sit to him the husbandmen and matrons of Scotland, and with them he illustrated the social manners of his country. So well had he studied, and so happily had he selected scenes in sympathy with his own powers and the popular feeling, that his first two pictures may be said to have established his fame. These were followed by a succession of pictures in the same spirit, in which much of the fine grouping, and life, and social character of the best Dutch painters appeared, accompanied by a purity and moral purpose unknown to that school.

Wilkie was jealous of the fame for which he had laboured so hard, and was more anxious at first to do slowly and well than which practice and experience might enable him subsequently to do with celerity and ease. He therefore exhibited only one picture, the "Card-players," in the exhibition of 1808; but his freedom of touch and finish was so far improved, that in the following year he had two pictures ready for the exhibition; these were the "Cut Finger" and the "Rent-day." The latter was bought by Lord Mulgrave for three hundred guineas: this picture is well known through the medium of Raimbach's excellent engraving, which, however, falls short of the character and expression of the original. One of the attractions of the exhibition of 1809 was Wilkie's portrait by Beechey.

The original picture, "Distraint for Rent," an idea of which is conveyed by our frontispiece, was exhibited in 1815. This picture was bought by the Governors of the British Institution for six hundred guineas; it was sold to Raimbach for engraving for the same sum, and when engraved, was bought from Raimbach by Mr. Wells, of Redleaf, for seven hundred guineas.

SNOW-STORMS. II.

IN our last paper on this subject, we presented a few illustrations of the severe degree in which the inhabitants of Scotland are occasionally exposed to snow-storms. In the present we shall relate a remarkable instance, which occurred in Italy, of several persons being buried for a considerable period beneath masses of snow, and yet extracted alive. An account has been already given in this work of the somewhat similar case of a woman in England*.

This event occurred at a place called Bergemotetto, near Demonte, in the upper valley of Stura, among the Alps. A small cluster of houses, situated at this spot, was entirely overwhelmed by two vast bodies of snow which fell down from a neighbouring mountain, on the 19th of March, 1755. All the inhabitants, twenty-four in all, were at that moment within the houses, except a man named Joseph Rochia and his son, who were engaged in clearing the roof of their house from the snow which had been falling heavily for some days. The father and son, being warned of the threatening mass of snow by a person who was passing at a distance, made a precipitate escape; and on looking back a minute afterwards, they saw the whole of the houses completely buried in snow. The man was so unnerved by the sight that he fell ill, and for five days could not join in the exertions necessary for relieving the inmates. A party of men clambered up on

the mass of snow, and tried, by digging, to find the place where each house stood; but for a long while in vain. Weeks passed on, during which all attempts to reach Rochia's house failed; but at length the April sun beginning to melt the snow, they were enabled gradually to remove or pierce through some of the snow, which was succeeded by a mass of ice six English feet in thickness.

Rochia and his brother-in-law, after working at the ice with iron bars, at length pierced it, and gained admission to their house, five weeks after the snow had enveloped it. The house was all in ruins, and the men searched in vain for the dead bodies of the inmates. On digging their way to the stable, however, which stood two or three hundred feet distant from the house, they were astonished at hearing a cry of "Help! my brother!" and immediately redoubled their exertions to remove some of the snow from the top of the stable. When this was done, the sister of one of the men was heard to exclaim, "I have always trusted in God and you, that you would not forsake me." The party entered the stable through a hole made in the snow, and there found two women and a young girl about thirteen years old. The men lifted the poor females on their shoulders, and raised them within reach of men above, who pulled them up, as if from a grave, and conveyed them to a neighbouring house: they were unable to walk, and so wasted that they appeared like mere skeletons. They were immediately attended with all the care which their neighbours could bestow, and gradually acquired strength to relate how they had supported themselves for this long period of confinement.

The intendant of the village obtained from the women an account of what had occurred. On the day of the snow-fall, they were in the stable with a boy of six years old, and a girl of about thirteen. There were also in the stable six goats, an ass, and five or six fowls. The wife, happening to go out of the stable, with the intention of kindling a fire for her husband in the house, perceived a mass of snow breaking down towards the east; she ran back hastily to the stable, shut the door, related to her sister what she had seen, and instantly after heard the mass descend on the stable, breaking down part of the roof. The terrified women crept into the rack and manger, the latter of which, by being under the main prop of the stable, resisted the weight of the snow above. Their first care was to know what they had to eat: the sister said she had fifteen chestnuts in her pocket; the children said they had breakfasted, and should want no more food that day. They remembered that there were thirty or forty cakes in a place near the stable, and endeavoured to get at them, but were not able to penetrate the snow. They called aloud for help, but, as may be supposed, received no reply. During the remainder of that day they ate two chestnuts each, and drank a little snow water.

On the second day they ate all the remaining chestnuts, and obtained a tolerable supply of milk from one of the goats. On the third day they made another attempt to get at the cakes, but without success. As they hoped to have a supply of milk from others of the goats in a short time, they endeavoured to keep the poor goats alive by the best treatment the circumstances afforded. Just above the manger was a hay-loft, whence, through a hole, one of the women pulled down hay into the rack, to feed the goats; and when it got beyond her reach, the goats climbed upon her shoulder, and helped themselves. Meanwhile the other animals, for whom the women could not afford to appropriate any portion of their scanty supply of food, gradually yielded to cold and famine. The ass was restless, and one of the goats kept bleating for some days, after which nothing more was heard of either. The fowls remained alive for twenty days, and by their crowing, gave the buried inmates some notion of the succession of night and day,

* See Saturday Magazine, Vol. I. p. 239.

for they were in utter darkness. On the sixth day the little boy sickened, and in six days afterwards he died, exclaiming just before his death, "O! my father is in the snow! O! father, father!"

One of the goats supplied them with about two pints of milk per day, until the period (about the middle of April) when they expected two other goats to have milk. At this time they felt compelled to kill the first-mentioned goat, which they did with many a pang, for the poor thing was wont to come and lick their hands when called, and show many signs of attachment. The women had no solid food from the time that the few chestnuts were eaten; goats' milk, and in scanty quantity, being their only means of subsistence. In reply to questions on this subject, they stated that they did not feel the pangs of hunger in any great intensity, except during the first five days. Their greatest pain was from the extreme coldness of the melted snow-water, the presence of the dead bodies of the animals, and the cramped position in which they were placed, for the manger in which they sat, crouching against the wall, was no more than three feet four inches broad. The mother had scarcely slept during the whole interval, but the sister and daughter had slept as usual.

ON ROPES AND ROPE-MAKING.

III.

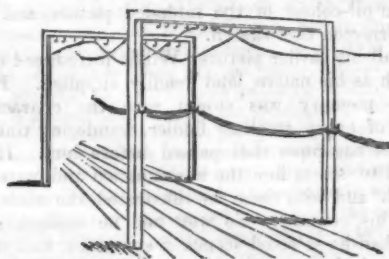
THE PROCESSES OF ROPE-MAKING.

THE hemp, of which all our ropes and the greater number of varieties of our string are made, is mostly brought from Russia in great bundles weighing from forty-five to sixty-five *poods* each, the *pood* being a Russian weight equal to about thirty-six pounds *avoirdupois*. These great bundles are made of smaller bundles, called *heads*, each weighing about twelve pounds; and these heads pass into the hands of the rope-maker. The hemp, although tolerably free from fragments of the boon, or other impurities, requires an operation somewhat like combing, to straighten the fibres: this process is called *hackling*, and is effected by drawing the fibres over pronged instruments called *hackles*, which clear from them the refuse, and split them into different degrees of fineness to suit the purposes for which they are required. The hackle consists of a number of polished steel spikes, or needles, fixed upright in a board; and in a complete set of hackles each one has the spikes closer than the one previously used, and more open than those which are to follow. The workman, standing at a convenient distance in front of the hackle, and holding by one end as large a bundle of hemp as he can conveniently grasp, draws it over the hackle, beginning with the end of the bunch farthest from his hand, and by repeated operations disentangles and splits the fibres nearly to where he grasps the bunch. He then takes hold of the finished end, and operates on the part which he had before grasped. The hemp is then drawn over a hackle with closer spikes, and then over another, and so on until the desired degree of fineness has been attained. The hemp is slightly oiled once now and then, to facilitate the operations, and the loose or short fibres which are combed out constitute what is called *tow*, employed in making inferior ropes.

The hackled hemp being laid by in bundles, the spinner next operates on it, and produces threads or yarns. This is effected in a rope-walk, a covered shed, from six to twelve hundred feet in length, at both ends of which are machines for communicating twist to the yarn, and along both sides of which, at equal intervals, and opposite each other, are vertical posts. Between every pair of posts a rail stretches across the walk, at a height of eight feet from the ground, and along the under side of the rail hooks are fixed for supporting the yarns, and to one of the upright posts of each pair is fastened a large hook, on which the yarns are hung when collected together.

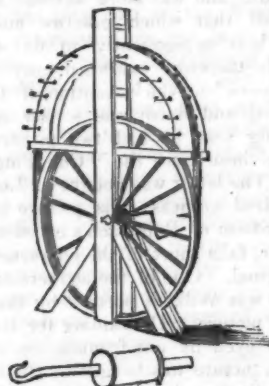
At the head and foot of the walk are stout posts, also for supporting the yarns. The spinning-machinery consists

Fig. 1.



of a wheel, turned by a winch, and having a band working round half its circumference and half round an arc in which are fitted a number of little pulleys, or hooked wires, by which arrangement twelve or sixteen of these little hooked wires are set in rapid rotation, each on its respective axis. The spinner takes a bundle of hemp,

Fig. 2.



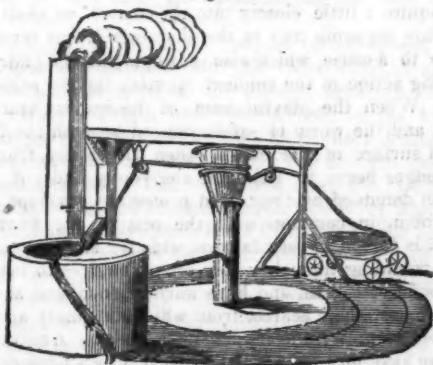
and passes it round his waist, the middle or doubled part being in front, and the ends passing each other at his back. He then draws out from the face of the bundle as many fibres as will make the size of yarn required, the middle, or "bight," of which he hangs on one of the whirl-hooks. He grasps the fibres between the finger and thumb of the right-hand, with a piece of woollen cloth interposed for the protection of his hand. He now walks backward down the rope-walk, while an assistant workman turns the wheel at the end, and thus, by making the whirl-hook rotate, imparts a twist to the fibres attached thereto. It will be evident, on a little consideration, that if a piece of string of definite length were twisted in this way for a long time, the fibres would be bound up so tight as at length to give way; but that if the length be increased as fast as the twisting goes on, the amount of twist may be made to equalize itself in any one part. Thus it is in rope-making: the assistant continues to turn the wheel, and the rope-maker continues to walk backward, regulating the supply of fibres from his bundle in such a manner as to render the yarn equal in size throughout. This regulation of the supply he effects with the left hand, drawing back the fibres as they enter his right hand in too great number, and pulling forward more when the supply is deficient. One object of his care is to prevent many ends of fibres from coming together in one place, by which the strength would become unequal in different parts.

In this manner the spinner proceeds until he comes down to the end of the walk, or as many men may be at work at once as there are whirl-hooks rotated by the spinning wheel. As each man arrives at one of the cross-rails, he throws his yarn up on one of the hooks, by which the yarn is prevented from dragging on the

ground. The men then join the ends of every pair of yarns, and hang them on the hooks inserted in the side posts, each pair being kept separate. In order now not to waste the time necessary in going from end to end of the walking ineffectively, the men proceed to spin a second set of yarns from the wheel at the bottom or "foot" of the walk, at which they have now arrived. Thus the spinners continue, until they have collected about four hundred yarns, which are then slightly twisted, to keep them together, and coiled up into a "haul." About six thousand yards of yarn are produced from a bundle of hemp weighing sixty-four pounds.

The process which follows the spinning of the yarns is that of *tarring*. The arrangements for effecting this differ slightly in different establishments, but they are nearly as follow. A copper, bedded in brick-work, with a furnace below, and flues around it, is devoted to the reception of the tar, and is called the *tar-kettle*. Into this kettle tar is poured, and heated to about the temperature of boiling water, and in this state the haul of yarn is dipped into it, or rather dragged through it. Near the kettle is a capstan, moved either by men or a horse, and between the kettle and the capstan is a *nipper*, an instrument having an aperture through which the haul must be dragged before it can be coiled round the capstan. A rope attached to the capstan is passed through the hole in the nipper and attached to the end of the haul. The haul being then immersed in the hot tar, and the capstan being set at work, the haul is drawn slowly through the tar, and the superfluous tar is squeezed out while passing through the nipper, which is so regulated as to exert a proper degree of pressure on the haul. As the yarn passes through, and is drawn away by the capstan, it is either coiled up on a stage or frame placed at hand for the purpose, or is wound at once on a reel. We may here remark that small ropes and string are not often tarred, that process being chiefly confined to the yarns intended for larger ropes.

Fig. 3.



The next operation is that of making or "laying" the *strands*. As that part of the rope-walk wherein the spinning of the yarn is effected is termed the *spinning-walk*, that which we have now to visit is called the *laying-walk*. At the head or upper end of this walk is an apparatus called a tackle-board, consisting of two strong vertical posts, across the front of which is placed a stout plank, pierced with three or four holes. In each of these holes is inserted a pin, capable of being worked on its own axis by a winch handle. As twisting the yarns into strands has the effect of shortening them, the twisting-machine at the other end of the walk must be moveable to be accommodated to the varying length of the strand: it is generally formed something like the tackle-board, on a stage capable of being moved, and called a sledge. Small implements, called *tops*, are employed in the process of forming a rope. These consist of conical blocks of wood, of different sizes, having three equidistant grooves along their surface, and pins through them

laterally, serving for handles. A piece of soft rope is attached to each handle of the "top" by its middle and the ends, and used to wrap round the rope in the process of making. Lastly, along the walk are ranged stakes and bearers, for supporting the strands during the process of making.

These being the arrangements, the proper number of yarns to make the rope are separated and ranged along the bearers from end to end of the walk, at about four feet from the ground. The yarns are then divided into three equal portions, each of which is hung upon its own hooks at the tackle-board and the sledge. The sledge is then pulled backwards until the yarns are all stretched tight; and arrangements are made for keeping them in this tightened condition. The three hooks connected with the winches are now turned in one direction, by which each collection of yarns hung on one hook is twisted round their common axis, and formed into a strand; the twisting of the strands shortens them, and draws the sledge up the walk.

A "strand" is one third of a rope, properly so called, and is merely a large number of yarns twisted one round another; and the rope consists of three such strands twisted together. But it is necessary to bear in mind the precautions observed in the *direction* of these twists. In the first place, the hempen fibres, as straightened and arranged by the hackle, are twisted at the spinning walk in one given direction, say to the right, and formed into *yarns*; in the next place, the assemblage of yarns necessary to form one *strand*, are twisted round one another, to the left; and in the third place, three strands, thus obtained, are twisted round one another to the right, the same way as the fibres in a yarn, but the opposite way from the yarns in a strand, and formed into a *rope*.

To effect this last mentioned twisting, namely, the forming of a rope from the strands, three strands are hung on one hook at each end of the walk; and the block of wood called the "top" is inserted among the strands, so that each strand shall rest in one of the grooves of the "top." The men at each end then turn the winches by which the hooks are governed, in opposite directions, by which the three strands are repeatedly and continually twisted around each other. The object of the "top" is to keep the three strands apart at a certain part of the length, in order that the twisting may be made regular and equable in every part. In the case of a very thick rope, the power of the men at the winches is insufficient to give the required twist to the whole length of rope; and in that case the twisting is assisted by instruments called *woolers*, each consisting of a stout pin with a rope fastened at each end. The rope of the wooler is wrapped round the rope, and the pin is used as a lever to twist the strands; the workmen at the woolers working round the rope in the same time as the hooks are twisted at the end.

To understand the philosophy of these processes, it is necessary to bear in mind the object to be effected. If the fibres used by the rope-maker were of sufficient length, the most effectual way of obtaining their united strength would be to lay them side by side, fastened together at each end, so as to form a bundle or skein; but as the fibres of hemp do not, on an average, exceed three feet and an half in length, it becomes necessary, in order to obtain a rope of greater length, so to twine them together that the strength of any single fibre shall be insufficient to overcome the resistance caused by the friction of those surrounding and compressing it; so that it will sooner break than be drawn out from the mass. This requisite entanglement is produced by twisting, which causes the fibres to compress each other; and it not only enables the rope-maker to produce cordage of any required length, but also, by making the rope hard and compact, increases its durability, and enables it to resist the penetration of water, which would rapidly impair its strength. While, however, some degree of

twist is absolutely essential to the cohesion of a rope, any twist beyond that which simply prevents the fibres being drawn out without breaking, is injurious. A skein of fibres, or a rope, may be twisted so hard that any further attempt at twisting would break it; and such a skein, or rope, will evidently have no power to support a weight, each fibre being already strained to the utmost extent that it will bear. In fact, whatever force is exerted by any fibre in compressing the rest, may be considered the same as a weight hanging on that fibre, and must be subtracted from its absolute strength before its useful effect can be ascertained; the available strength of a rope being the remainder of the absolute strength of its component fibres after deducting the force exerted in twisting them. Were a rope to be formed by simply twisting together, in one direction, the whole of the fibres of which it is composed, there is nothing to prevent its untwisting as soon as left to itself. It is therefore necessary to twist the fibres in comparatively small portions, and so to combine these into a rope that the tendency to untwist in one part may counteract the like tendency in another. Thus the same force which would cause the component parts, if separate, to become loose or untwisted, is employed, when they are combined into a rope, to keep the whole firm and compact.

We thus find an explanation of the reasons for the different processes. The fibres of hemp are twisted into stout threads called rope-yarns, about one-tenth of an inch in diameter; then from fifteen to twenty-five of these strands are twisted in the opposite direction, and formed into a strand; three or more of these strands are twisted in the same direction as the fibres of hemp in the yarns, and formed into a "strand-laid rope," or a "hauser-laid rope;" and lastly, for very large ropes, three hauser-laid ropes are twisted in the same direction as the yarns in a strand, to form a "cable-laid rope," or a cable.

We have confined our description to the mode of making ropes by hand, as originally practised, and as practised in many places at the present day. This will much more readily convey an idea of the nature of the processes than a description of elaborate machinery, employed for the same purpose. Indeed, these machines have become so varied that it would be scarcely possible to notice any of them here. Nearly thirty patents for improvements in rope-making were taken out between the years 1783 and 1807; and a constant succession of other patents has been since granted.

So far from complete inaction being perfect enjoyment, there are few sufferings greater than that which the total absence of occupation generally induces. Count Caylus, the celebrated French antiquary, spent much time in engraving the plates which illustrate his valuable works. When his friends asked him why he worked so hard at such an almost mechanical occupation, he replied, *Je grave pour ne pas me pendre*,—"I engrave lest I should hang myself." When Napoleon was slowly withering away, from disease and *ennui* together, on the rock of St. Helena, it was told him that one of his old friends, an ex-colonel in his Italian army, was dead. "What disease killed him?" asked Napoleon; "That of having nothing to do," it was answered. "Enough," sighed Napoleon, "even had he been an emperor."

Nature has beneficently provided, that if the greater proportion of her sons must earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, that bread is far sweeter from the previous effort than if it fell spontaneously into the hand of listless indolence. It is scarcely to be questioned then, that labour is desirable for its own sake, as well as for the substantial results which it affords; and, consequently, that it by no means lessens, but rather adds to, the general chance of happiness, that nearly all the members of society should, in some shape or other, be placed under an obligation to labour for their support.—DR. POTTER.

THE ROBIN RED-BREAST.

The fowls of Heaven,
Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
The winnowing store, and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them. One alone,
The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,
Wisely regardless of the embroiling sky,
In joyless fields and thorny thickets, leaves
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
His annual visit. Half afraid, he first
Against the window beats; then, brisk, alights
On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is,
Till more familiar grown, the table-crumb
Attracts his slender feet.

THOMSON.

THE Robin Red-breast is a universal favourite. His familiarity and confidence in man, together with the sweetness of his plaintive song, render him a welcome visitor wherever he goes. And as at this season of the year, pressed by cold and hunger, he ventures boldly beneath our roof, and often becomes so thoroughly domesticated amongst us as to form part of our family circle, we have abundant opportunity of watching his movements, and tracing the peculiar features in his character. Let not our readers smile; the robin, the sparrow, the lark, the wren,—all our feathered acquaintance have their distinctive characters. According to their respective tribes and families, one is gentle and confiding, another pert and voracious; some are timid and retiring, others bold and obtrusive; but it is very evident to those who watch their proceedings, that they are not less distinguishable for characteristic differences of disposition and temperament, than for variety of form, voice, and plumage. This being the case, let us examine somewhat closely the character of our friendly little winter visitant, the red-breast.

The first thing that strikes us with respect to this bird is, his *familiarity*. The close-packed denizens of our cities may not be acquainted with the extent to which this quality is carried by the bird in situations where he may safely exhibit his confidence in man. Perhaps if we inquire a little closely into the matter, we shall find that this engaging trait in the character of our favourite is due to a cause which also prompts many a fair and pleasing action in the conduct of man, that is, self-interest. When the playful hum of insects is heard no more, and the worm is safely housed beneath the frost-bound surface of the earth; when the stony fruits of the hedges begin to fail, and the young buds of trees are yet defended by their hard protecting envelope, then the robin, in common with the rest of the feathered tribes, is forced to seek far and wide for sustenance, and more confiding than they, he often ventures to take up his abode with man, and finds warmth, food, and shelter, at some hospitable hearth, from which the family are loth to drive so pretty and inoffensive a guest. And though he may have no better motive than his own preservation from the fate that befalls so many of his fellows, and though we are sure that at the first indication of returning spring, he will leave the roof of his benefactor, and joyfully flee away to the neighbouring grove, yet are we glad to see the bright sparkle of his clear black eye, and to hear the sweet strains with which he rewards our hospitality.

In connexion with the familiarity of the robin, we have several pleasant recollections of our own. One winter, in particular, recurs to our memory, remarkable for its peculiar severity, and for its effects on the lower animals. During that season, we were resident in a quiet and secluded spot, where we had leisure to notice more particularly the different phenomena of nature going on around us, and the results which they produced on animal and vegetable life. Many an admired evergreen, many a cherished plant fell a sacrifice to the intense cold, and among the smaller of the feathered tribe the effects were very similar. An adventurous robin, however, resolving to escape, if possible, the miseries of

cold and hunger, established himself during the day beneath the shelter of our roof. At first, with his peculiarly rapid but interrupted hop, he ventured into the kitchen, where the warmth, and the abundance of food attracted him. Here, the bustle and the hasty movements to and fro somewhat daunted his resolution, so that he could only contrive to secure a few crumbs before he made his retreat. A second attempt, made at a more auspicious moment, was so well received by the inmates, and so encouraging to the bird, that he now fearlessly ranged every part of the room in search of food, and perching on a holly branch which adorned the wall, he sang to them a few little notes of gratitude before his departure. From this time the robin was our constant guest. Early in the morning, as soon as the door was opened, he left his roosting place in a neighbouring outhouse, to enjoy the friendly shelter of his new home.

His visits, which were at first confined to the kitchen, now extended to the other parts of the house. If the door or window of the dining-room was left open for a short time, we were sure to see our little friend, who would first perform the duty of gathering up the crumbs beneath our table, and then take his favourite station on the top of an Argand lamp, which stood on the sideboard. Here he would in general content himself with watching the proceedings of the party to whose presence he had introduced himself, but occasionally we were favoured with a song, the notes of which were so sweet, clear, and yet subdued, that for the time we were wont to give precedence to his music above that of all the songsters of the spring. It was now no unusual thing to find our robin in the sleeping apartments, or in those devoted to study, and when it was wished to exclude him from either of these rooms, and the window was set open for that purpose, we were sometimes highly amused to find that no sooner had we driven him out in that direction, than with his rapid flight he immediately entered the house again through the kitchen, and was winging his way upstairs to the very same apartment he had just been compelled to quit.

For a time, the excessive freedom of our guest was borne without complaint, and his visits afforded much pleasure and diversion to the younger branches of the family; but at length when every room in the house was subject to his intrusion, when he not only demanded our hospitality on his own account, but brought one of his acquaintances to share in it, and when the tarnished state of the furniture reminded us that however interesting it may be to have tame birds flying about our apartments, it is a practice wholly irreconcilable with the maxims of neatness and order; when all these things were constantly pressing upon our attention, we were at last obliged to concur in the decision, that our presuming friend must inevitably be banished the house. But this was a thing more easily talked of than done. The doors and windows could not always be kept shut; nor could we be so constantly on the watch to exclude the bird as he was on the watch to come in. This being the case, an expedient was resorted to, which, it was hoped, might prove successful. The robin was caught, put into a wicker basket, and carried to a village, about a mile distant, where he might be likely to find another home in one of the cottages, without causing the same sort of inconvenience as among ourselves. Having set him at liberty in the immediate neighbourhood of these humble dwellings, the messenger returned well pleased with his expedition; but long before he could reach our residence, the robin was at his former post, and taking advantage of the unguarded state of the house had triumphantly effected an entrance. That it was the same bird, we could not for a moment doubt, for we had, by long companionship, become so well acquainted with his form and habits, that we were able to point him out as "our robin," when associated with other birds upon the lawn.

Another week was now allowed to pass by, without any

attempt to rid ourselves of an annoyance which seemed without remedy. But on the occasion of a visit of the younger members of the family to a country town about seven miles off, it occurred to the mistress of the house (whose love of order was especially outraged by the manners of the bird) that the robin might as well go too; he might possibly like the town better than the village to which we had previously sent him; at any rate, he could but come back again as before. Again we succeeded in catching the bird, and consigning him to his wicker prison. He was placed in the carriage with the children, who departed well pleased at having the charge of their little favourite. Arrived in the vicinity of the town, they opened the basket and bid adieu to the robin, half hoping, however, that they should find him at home again when they returned. In this they were deceived, for we never saw our pretty intruder again. Other birds of his kind occasionally sought and obtained our hospitality, but none were found so fearless or so troublesome as he; and none, as he did, ventured to follow the members of the family into every part of the house, and to make themselves so completely "at home."

Although we ourselves have never met with another instance of such complete familiarity on the part of the robin, we have lately read of one as occurring to M. Gérardin, in November, 1788. A redbreast shivering with cold, tapped at the window of that gentleman and obtained admittance. The bird perched with the utmost confidence on the back of an elbow chair near the fire. When it had recovered from the effects of the cold, its first occupation was to attempt catching the few house flies which had been awakened from their dormancy by the warmth of the apartment. It was fed upon crumbs of bread and small shreds of boiled beef; and so well did it like its lodging and its board that it not only remained during the winter, but sung its hymns of gratitude as cheerfully every morning as if it had been perched upon a twig in the spring. It was particularly familiar with M. Gérardin, and although it did not actually assist him in his studies, it amused him while engaged in them. It perched upon his desk and sometimes upon his left hand while he was writing; in short it was more familiar than the majority of birds which are reared from the nest with the greatest care.

We shall have more to say respecting the habits of the robin on a future occasion; we now conclude with Dr. Jenner's lines addressed to this bird.

Come, sweetest of the feathered throng
And soothe me with thy plaintive song:
Come to my cot, devoid of fear,
No danger shall await thee here:
No prowling cat with whiskered face
Approaches this sequestered place:
No schoolboy with his willow-bow
Shall aim at thee a murderous blow:
No wily lured twig ere molest
Thy olive wing or crimson breast.
Thy cup, sweet bird! I'll daily fill
At yonder cressy, bubbling rill;
Thy board shall plentifully be spread
With crumblets of the nicest bread;
And when rude winter comes and shows
His icicles and shivering snows,
Hop o'er my cheerful hearth, and be
One of my peaceful family:
Then soothe me with thy plaintive song,
Thou sweetest of the feathered throng!

SKETCHES OF IRISH MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

III.

THE improvement effected by the temperance pledge in this part of the country is very striking; the people of all persuasions consider it as a great blessing. Even the public-house keepers regard it in the same light, as they say though they do not sell spirits they sell a great

deal more of everything else: the people feel their comforts increased, they can buy more meat, and more clothes, and the price of provisions has fallen. It is to be sure the most curious instance of the power of opinion; they say if they take the medal, as they phrase it, they *cannot* drink; and I know two men of very sober steady habits, who have taken the medal under the strongest conviction of its constraining power, and that they absolutely *could* not drink were they so inclined. It has happened to us to have punch refused by three men in two days. One man had fasted from five in the morning till five in the afternoon, and had walked twelve miles of most fatiguing mountain road. A meal was set before him, and punch offered, which he declined,—he had taken the pledge. Another had been employed for us in a disagreeable job under a very hot sun, merely from goodnature and obligingness, and I took the tumbler to him myself, as a little acknowledgement and likely to please him more than sending it by a servant; he thanked me very much, but declined. The third had been hard at work all day, and to encourage him to make a good job a glass of punch was promised him when it was finished; he declined, having taken the pledge; he accepted very thankfully the meal of meat that was given him instead. Perhaps three stronger cases could hardly have been found: and surely ten years ago such abstinence would not have been found in the whole island. There have been fairs in the surrounding villages; they are, indeed, innumerable, and are very useful, supplying the want of shops and markets. The people return from five to seven o'clock as quietly as they go: there may be a few lovers of *potheen* lingering in the public-houses, but there is no noise or disturbance on the roads, and the general appearance is perfectly decent and sober.

In returning from church one evening I got into conversation with a very nice woman; her cap-border and the handkerchief tied over her cap were as white as snow, and her face and hands nearly as white, and quite as clean, and the rest of her dress very neat. She was a widow with children to support,—little means and poor health. We talked, of course, of the weather and then of the sermon, and she asked me if I did not like the evening sermon better than the morning, because it told us more of ourselves: she thought it did her more good, and right enough she was; one was a plain, kindly, gospel sermon; the other clever, lively, and amusing, with allusions and quotations, and very strong against the Roman Catholics. I was glad she felt the difference, and probably there were many more of her opinion.

I like seeing the older women at church in caps and handkerchiefs; it is the neatest and most modest head-gear I ever saw, and far better adapted to the climate than bonnets, which I know by my own uncomfortable experience are always blown to the back of the head. Welsh hats would not stand firm against our gales. The girls still wear their hair coiled behind very neatly, and some wear a little black bandeau: they put their shawls over their heads when they go out in the damp or cold, which looks very picturesque, and often elegant, when the shawl is very large. The tartans are universal, of every imaginable colour and check; and the modest demeanour of the young creatures wrapped in their warm folds as they pass on their way without so much as glancing at the passers by, is quite charming.

On Sundays the girls are ambitious of bonnets, which quite spoils their appearance, and except the old women and the police, the church has a strictly English appearance; too much so, for the bare heads and bare legs are then decked in a style so much above the week-day costume, that one can hardly recognise them, and a more equal tidiness would be much better than the too frequent holes and slatternliness for six days, and the smart bonnets and flowers, silk shawls, tight sleeves and flounces of the seventh. The taste for fashion and finery is just as strong in this obscure nook, as in St. James' Street

We had the good fortune to meet with a wake the other night. A number of persons were seated on two benches as tight as they could be wedged; and there were neither eatables, nor drinkables, nor pipes. A few were smoking, but it was evidently not a thing provided for the company. There was a great deal of chat and cheerfulness going on, and apparently a little *coorting*. A sort of closet door was open, and something covered with white, with two candles burning at the end, appeared, which we took to be the coffin: we inquired for the widow and children, and were told "they were in it;" and as we could not discover them in the crowd they were probably sharing the closet with the corpse. Many persons who could by no means squeeze into the room remained outside, where the jocularly was of rather a more boisterous character, but solely the consequence of animal spirits; there would be a cry to pitch such a one into the girls; whereupon, with a great "hoorush," a boy would be jerked forward into the room, and then there would be a cry to be "more dacent." We were told it was a poor wake, but that some time ago there was one held in a loft: "And that was the great gun, entirely, for the loft gave way; and it was over a byre, and there were stakes in the byre, and down came the people toppling one over another; and there was scrambling, and screeching, and struggling, and many were much hurt; and sure the gun o' that wake bate everything ever I seen." About twelve the chat and laughter of our wake was fast subsiding, and we heard a man say, "Come along, Pat, out o' that, they're getting paceable now;" there was no keening, and it had more the air of a rural conversation than anything I can liken it to. The people all say the wake is going rapidly out of use.

The police lounging about in all the little villages has rather an unpleasant appearance to an English eye; and their presence in church is sometimes curiously manifested. One Sunday there was a pause just before one of the psalms began, and as the singing is of the most awful description, when I saw the sexton whisper to a great long policeman, and that he and another Goliath in green immediately left their seats, and proceeded up the aisle, I concluded the clerk, who acts as precentor, wanted to strengthen his choir, and wondered whether my ears would endure the increased din the men of war would make; but they stopped just short of the clerk's desk, and then returned down the aisle, nobody looking at them or their proceedings. So I was greatly surprised to see a little drunken man in their grasp, whom they flung from them when they reached the door, shut the door, and stalked back to their seats. I don't know whether I was most surprised by the interference of the *polish*, as they call them, or by the *nonchalance* of the people. This was the only drunken man I had seen at the end of my first three months of residence.

The police are respectable-looking men; very regular at church, and always in proper time. The irregular arrival of the congregation is very unpleasant:—to the very sermon persons continue dropping in, and they enter and establish themselves with perfect satisfaction.

One of the police duties, of course, is to clear out the public-houses, especially at fairs; and it is very satisfactory to see the calm quiet decision with which they perform the duty. When I was first in Ireland there was a strong feeling against the Peelers, as they were then rather sneeringly called,—so strong, as to be constantly apparent to us in our rapid progress. Now at the end of several months' quiet residence, I have neither seen or heard of any ill feeling existing towards the police throughout this part of the country.

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